

*Resurrection of our Lord-April 17, 2022
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish
Luke 24:1-12*

“He IS Here!” Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

Happy Easter! The resurrection of Jesus changes everything for you and for me. The resurrection of Jesus changed everything for the people who came to find Jesus on the very first Easter. You know this is true by the very first word in Luke’s account of the resurrection of Jesus. “But”. This word appears several more times throughout the gospel that you just heard and each time after the word “but” appears something has changed from what used to be to what is new. Whenever I hear someone else use the word, “but” I know there is something more important they want me to know after when they said **but**, than what was said previously.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

These words don’t tell us what happened before, nor do they identify who the “they” are referring to. **But**, I think you know, because this is not the first time you have heard this story and you, regardless of your age, have not forgotten it. The “they” are the women who were coming to the tomb to finish preparing the body of Jesus for burial. It was the first day of the week because this was the earliest possible time for the women to finish their work since Jesus died on the sabbath and it was against the law to even do this important work on that sacred day. The women came to the tomb as early as they could, **but** the work they planned to do was about to change.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **but** when they went in, they did not find the body.

Once again, this is not your first hearing of this Easter story, so you already know what has taken place after they went into the tomb. Other gospel accounts of the resurrection tell us that the women were discussing between themselves as they walked to the tomb how they were going to roll the heavy stone away from the entrance to the tomb. **But**, when they arrived, the stone was already rolled away. What these women knew for certain was about to change. They knew Jesus was crucified. They knew he had died. They knew he was put into the tomb. They knew the stone had been rolled to cover the entrance of the tomb. **But** now the stone had been rolled away. And to make the work they came to do impossible; the body of Jesus was gone. Scripture doesn’t say that they didn’t find Jesus, it says they didn’t find his body. At this point, the women were expecting to find the lifeless body of Jesus, **but** they were only believing what they were seeing. They weren’t thinking about what they had been told. The women not only wondered who took away the stone, they also wondered who took the body of Jesus from the tomb.

But the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.

The two unidentified men begin by supporting the women’s observation by agreeing with them by saying “He is not here.” The women apparently had looked everywhere in the tomb, and they were certain that Jesus was clearly not in the tomb. This is when the men retold what Jesus had told them women earlier. The events that Jesus had told them were going through their minds. The women remembered Jesus being handed over to sinners. They remembered Jesus being crucified just as Jesus said would happen. **But** Jesus also told them that on the third day he would rise again. It took these two men to remind the women of everything that Jesus had told them before they remembered and believed the words of Jesus.

But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

The women who came to the tomb as undertakers, left the tomb as preachers of good news. They ran to tell the eleven disciples what they had been told and how they now remembered what Jesus had said that he would rise again, **but** their words were not enough for the disciples who heard from Jesus first hand more times than the women did about his rising again. **But** they were still in disbelief.

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stopping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

The women must have at least given Peter some reason to run to the tomb to see for himself if the women’s story was true. Peter was amazed to look into the tomb and not find Jesus. The gospel reading for today ends with Peter going home and the translation that we read today said that Peter was amazed. A more accurate translation likely would describe Peter’s amazement as wondering. Peter was amazed that Jesus was not there **but** if Jesus was not there, where was Jesus and Peter wondered.

The body of Jesus was not stolen. He didn’t say that would happen. Jesus did not go into hiding so that you would need to find him. Next week you will hear the account of the disciples going into hiding on the afternoon of the resurrection and Jesus finding them. Jesus did not wait in the tomb for the women to arrive. His three days were up, and the stone was rolled away and Jesus was gone. Jesus was alive and he was doing what the women were now doing. Jesus was finding people and proclaiming that he was risen from the dead.

Jesus never entered the tomb again. The grave is not where you will find Jesus. **But** Jesus is here. He is in this place of worship, and he has found you. The first Easter changed for the first witnesses what they expected to find to the good news that Jesus had promised. This very same good news that was delivered on the first Easter is yours today. Jesus has found you and delivers judgment not based on the law, but on his mercy given to you by his every word. He has spoken to you with his words of forgiveness through his spoken word and he will speak again to you in the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. Yes, **Jesus is here**. There was nothing we could do to raise Jesus from the grave and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. God has done the work for you. It is finished. Amen